

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE RETURNING STUDENT

From your Board of Health

Schools have experienced cases of COVID-19 when in session. Even though many campuses have closed, students who have returned home have become ill after exposure that occurred at school.

WHAT SHOULD YOU BE AWARE OF AND WHAT PRECAUTIONS SHOULD YOU TAKE UPON RETURNING HOME?

(Note: the following information was gleaned from various Centers for Disease Control and Massachusetts Department of Public Health Fact Sheets, and local health care professionals.)

Can I get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person throughout of the world. Risk of infection from the virus that causes COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

It has now been documented that many of the hospitalized patients with COVID-19 are 20 – 54 years old. Thus, being younger is not a protection. However, these patients have fewer severe complications than older people or those with chronic illnesses.

CDC does not generally issue advisories or restrictions for travel within the United States. However, cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) have been reported in all states, and some areas are experiencing community spread of the disease. Crowded travel settings, like airports, may increase chances of getting COVID-19, if there are other travelers with coronavirus infection. There are several things you should consider when deciding whether it is safe for you to travel.

Do you live with someone who is older or has a serious, chronic medical condition?

If you get sick with COVID-19 upon your return from school/travel, your household contacts are at risk of infection. Household contacts who are [older adults or persons of any age with severe chronic medical conditions](#) are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Is COVID-19 spreading where I live when I return from school/travel?

Consider the risk of passing COVID-19 to others, particularly if you will be in close contact with people who are [older adults or have severe chronic health condition](#). These people are at higher risk of getting very sick. If your symptoms are mild or you don't have a fever, you may not realize you are infectious.

Until you are sure you and your friends won't share COVID-19 along with your good times:

- The incubation period of COVID-19 can be as long as 14 days. Be extra careful as to whom you come in close contact with during those 14 days. This is especially important if you're returning from overseas or if you've learned of a COVID-19 diagnosis at your school.
- Call/Facetime/online chat with friends and family to avoid direct contact.
- Avoid public places as much as possible.

It mainly boils down to personal responsibility and common sense for all of us.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. *Better yet, sneeze into your arm and elbow (it's faster than trying to dig out a tissue or handkerchief. Your arm and elbow are always accessible and ready.)*
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Don't gather in groups of more than 10 people (an order from the Federal and State Governments.) Even at private gatherings/parties.

ALL THE FACTS ARE GIVING THE SAME MESSAGE: BE AWARE, BE KIND, BE COURTEOUS, BE SMART ABOUT HOW YOU CONDUCT YOURSELF DURING THIS OUTBREAK.

IF YOU BECOME ILL WITH A FEVER OVER 101°F AND EXPERIENCE SHORTNESS OF BREATH, DO NOT GO TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT OF THE LOCAL HOSPITAL.

CONTACT YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER OR CALL THE BERKSHIRE HEALTH SYSTEM TOLL FREE HOT-LINE (855-262-5465), BETWEEN 7 AM AND 7 PM, FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.